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Factors That Contributed to the Demise of Delta-Kappa Chapter of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity at Ohio Wesleyan University

Several things happened during and after my four years at Ohio Wesleyan, the significance of which I hardly even considered back then. Now, with time to dig into that topic, I want to write down my recollections and add to it the comments of others, supplemented by articles from the *Transcript* and certain national newspapers.

For background, the October 12, 1972 *Transcript* provides a concise history of fraternity housing at OWU. The peak number of fraternities occurred in 1930-31, when sixteen existed. "By 1951, many houses needed major repairs; some had been condemned. The University embarked on a project to build 'Fraternity Row' on Williams Drive." To finance that construction, half of the cost would come from the University's Endowment Fund and the other half from alumni donations. However, as the *Transcript* continued, "Kappa Sigma and Tau Kappa Epsilon bought houses outright, with no obligation to the University." Three other fraternities (Alpha Tau Omega, Chi Phi, and Pi Lambda Phi) did not relocate their houses to Williams Drive. What, if any, financial relationship existed between the University and the titles to those fraternity houses, is unknown to this author.

The Reverend N. J. "Skip" L'Heureux is a Kappa Sigma brother who graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1967. He remained active in the affairs of the fraternity for many years at both the local and National level. He recalls that the Kappa Sigma house at 72 West Winter Street was purchased in the 1930s, a few years after the Delta-Kappa Chapter of the fraternity was colonized at OWU in 1926.

Thus, in the 1950s and 1960s, neither Kappa Sigma nor Tau Kappa Epsilon were located on Williams Drive.

Perhaps this resulted in the University having less than optimal control and leverage in the affairs of those two fraternities. While this situation may have provided some perceived advantage to the Kappa Sigma house, in certain situations, it may also have resulted in lessened ability of the University to address problems that developed at Kappa Sigma in the 1970s and early 1980s.

I was as naïve as you might imagine any eighteen-year-old boy from Milan, Michigan (population 3,000-surrounded by corn fields) might have been when I got to OWU. Charley, my older brother, was already there as a Kappa Sig and had found his niche in the Theatre Department. There was not much question about whether I would pledge the same fraternity.

I remember a conversation with Charley, while a pledge, about membership requirements at Kappa Sigma. He told me that “any white, male, Christian was eligible for membership.” That seemed puzzling, since at that time, there were several Jewish brothers at Delta-Kappa. Although I recognized the hypocrisy of that situation, it didn’t occur to me that this was a situation in need of any further thought or action by me personally. Later in life, I came to regret that fact.

L’Heureux has made an extensive review of archival documents at the National level of Kappa Sigma. In personal correspondence, he clarified that although “white” did indeed occur in the membership requirements of Kappa Sigma as late as the 1950s, being “Christian” never had been one of the requirements. But, regardless of exactly what had been in the Constitution of Kappa Sigma, L’Heureux could find no evidence that Jewish men had been pledged until the 1950s.

The last time I visited the House at 72 West Winter Street was late in 1967 and the chapter seemed to be functioning well. Two good-sized pledge classes had

been recruited in 1966 and 1967. You will probably remember that in the United States, the summer of 1967 was marked by civil unrest related to racial injustice and inequality. At about that time, racism became a topic of greater concern at OWU. Negative attitudes toward racist membership requirements of some Greek organizations must have contributed to an overall decline in pledging at OWU. Please see the appendix at the end of this article for additional details concerning Kappa Sigma, in particular.

L'Heureux outlined significant facts about the Delta-Kappa Chapter:

“You may be aware that in 1969, the house at 72 West Winter was sold and we bought from the University the former Delt House (known then as the Franklin House) which was on North Franklin and Griswold. It was larger, and in better condition. At the Conclave that summer, I had arranged for Al Rockwell, the outgoing WGM [Worthy Grand Master of Kappa Sigma] and Chairman of North American Rockwell Corporation, to come for a dedication of the “new” House at Homecoming in October 1969.”

L'Heureux noted that the University instituted delayed rush during the 1969-70 academic year. Rush took place after freshmen had had one full semester at OWU. That proved to be problematic for Delta-Kappa of Kappa Sigma. L'Heureux continued:

“There were 19 Kappa Sigma pledges in the class of 1970 (they pledged my senior year, in September 1966). However, beginning in 1970, the chapter size shrunk annually by half with each graduation. By the spring of 1975, there was only one brother set to return to school in the fall. But a successful rush, that same spring, appeared to be a Godsend. Nonetheless, with only one initiated brother present in the fall of 1975, the National

organization of Kappa Sigma placed the Delta-Kappa Chapter, at OWU, on colony status.

“Being a colony (rather than holding Chapter status) meant that the fraternity was eligible for augmented support by the National organization. This included consultative services and increased visits by active brothers from other chapters. But it also meant that, as a colony, decisions regarding membership were no longer under control of the local fraternity. [This was significant, in view of a certain certification demanded by the University and signed by the National organization of Kappa Sigma in September 1966. See the Appendix for details.] The result was that approval of the DGM [District Grand Master] was required for initiation of the colony’s pledges.

“Unfortunately, Charlie Anderson was back as DGM and (because one guy in the class was Black, a great student who later graduated with honors from Harvard Medical School) his [Anderson’s] virulent racism held back initiations [of all the pledges] for two years. Finally, in January 1977, the fraternity regained Chapter status and was able to initiate new members. But this occurred only after the lone Black man depledged. The enthusiasm of that class was, to say the least, destroyed. They all got used to, and enjoyed, single rooms (which was not economically viable) and they did nothing to rush. By 1980-81 the decision was made to withdraw the Chapter with the expectation that, after a four-year hiatus, we would recolonize.”

Representative articles from the *Transcript* illuminate the final sixteen months of the Delta-Kappa Chapter:

October 30, 1980: Kappa Sigma reported three new pledges (this was in the fall, after delayed rush for freshmen had begun, so these men must have been upper classmen).

“In December 1980, the pilot light on the heater went out, causing the pipes to freeze and burst. According to senior Bob O’Brien, last year’s president, about three inches of water flooded the basement. The water soaked the first-floor carpet and walls, he said.” (The preceding quote comes from the February 4, 1982 *Transcript*.)

January 22, 1981: “A Fraternity Experience Program has been developed to ‘maintain and continue to develop quality fraternity experiences’ at OWU. . . .” Four of the twelve existing fraternities were required to sign performance contracts. They were Sigma Alpha Epsilon, Tau Kappa Epsilon, Alpha Tau Omega, and Kappa Sigma. One main reason cited for the inclusion of Kappa Sigma was a lack of “ ‘alumni-adviser support.’ ” It was implied that another reason was the failure of the chapter to maintain adequate membership. A separate article in the same edition reported that applications for entry into OWU were down 10.8 percent from the prior year.

The author made numerous attempts to review any document that would explain just what the “Fraternity Experience Program” specified. Such a document must have been circulated to all the fraternities on campus in 1981 and thus, would not have been subject to concerns regarding confidentiality. Oddly, email correspondence with representatives of Ohio Wesleyan’s Special Collections Library, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, and the President’s Office (holding archival minutes of the Board of Trustees) failed to unearth any record of that obviously important program.

October 22, 1981: Kappa Sigma reported no new pledges from fall rush.

With admissions down, some houses on Williams Drive had vacant rooms. The University had a financial interest in keeping those rooms occupied, and that fact

compounded other problems facing Alpha Tau Omega, in particular.

January 21, 1982: "Alpha Tau Omega (ATO) members were misled to believe that if they left the house, they could get off campus, according to junior Chris Eshman. Instead, sophomores and juniors will be housed in Selby Stadium, Smith Hall, or Austin Hall, James Miller, associate dean and director of residential life, said. . . . Miller said the reason was finances. 'It came down to a budget problem,' he said. 'I would have liked to see greater flexibility.' . . . Nine seniors were granted off campus status, however, they will get back only a proportion of their room and board for this term. They are required to stay on the meal plan through this term even when they are off campus, Miller said." As far as the situation at Kappa Sigma was concerned, it may have appeared financially beneficial to the University if the Delta-Kappa Chapter were just closed (which actually occurred two weeks later).

January 28, 1982: "The 18 members [six of whom were pledges] of Kappa Sigma (Kappa Sig) will find out this weekend whether or not national officers will suspend their chapter as recommend by alumni advisors, according to Scott Rider, local alumni and financial advisor. . . . Dick Huebner, national executive director of Kappa Sig in Charlottesville, Va., said national was concerned 'over the health of the chapter.' . . . Huebner said national granted Kappa Sig a loan for 'house improvement' about 10 years ago. . . . 'They've been delinquent on loan payments,' he said. 'And there is no evidence of significant progress (in fixing up the house).' . . . Huebner said other reasons for the action stemmed from a lack of members, past inability to attract new members, lack of response to national ideals and infrequent attendance at conventions. He said he recommended temporarily closing the chapter 'to provoke discussion for an appropriate outcome.' "

February 4, 1982: "The Supreme Executive Committee of Kappa Sigma (Kappa Sig), meeting in Seattle, voted 5-0 Saturday to revoke the charter of the OWU chapter. James Miller, associate dean and director of residential life, said 'Alumni have made numerous efforts to help.' However, the local chapter is estranged from the local alumni, so alumni aren't directly involved, Miller added." Thus, the Delta-Kappa Chapter of Kappa Sigma, established at Ohio Wesleyan in 1926, became dormant.

L'Heureux described two subsequent attempts to reestablish Delta-Kappa:

"There were two attempts to recolonize. I think the first was around 1991-1992, but it turned out that virtually all the 14-15 [colonists/pledges] were members of the OWU Hockey team, to which they held primary allegiance and they never made it to Chapter status after two years. [Records at the National Organization show that the colony became dormant in 1993.] The second attempt was in the late 90s with no success at all. [Records at the National show Delta-Kappa achieved colony status March 8, 2002 and became dormant again October 16, 2002.] Both were staffed by Consultants from Charlottesville with the assistance of some undergrads from other chapters. The House Corporation picked up expenses for both efforts.

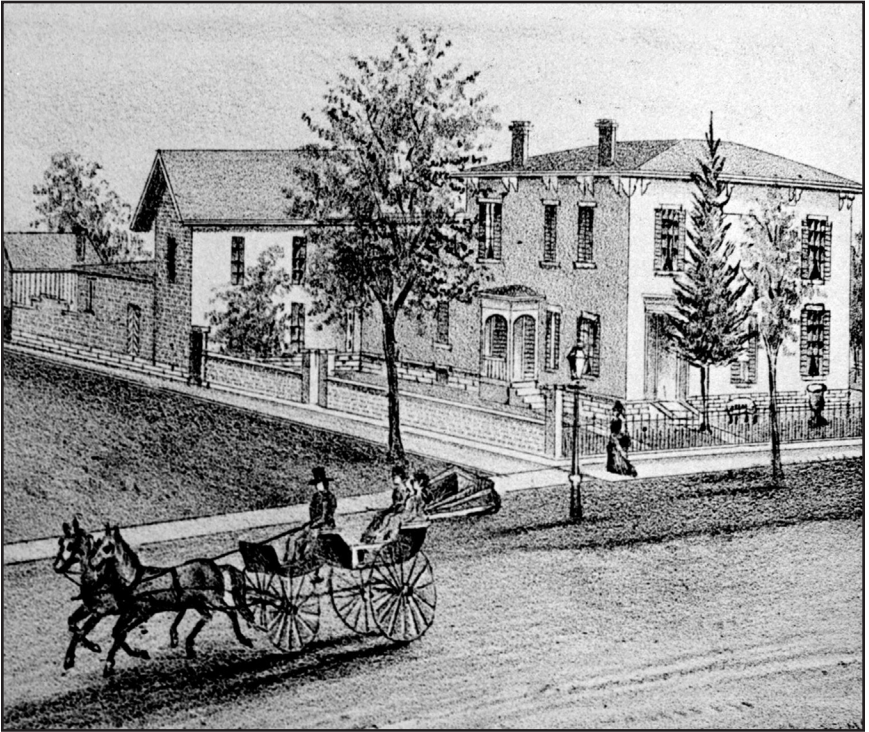
"Through this period a few alumni from the late 40s and early 50s became involved. Notably Elmer Brown (1940s) who was initiated at Delta-Kappa prior to the War and finished his education at Bowling Green where he led the creation of the Kappa Sigma chapter there. The other was Chuck Hilty who graduated, I think, around 1951. Chuck had been the undersecretary of Agriculture in the George H. W. Bush administration and was proud that Clinton continued him as Acting Secretary for the first six months of his term in 1993.

“The other contributing factor was the death of Jim Blair, an alumnus of the Kappa Sigma Chapter at OWU. He was an attorney in Delaware who had handled the funds of the House Corporation, which had been helped in the 1980s (soon after the Chapter was closed) by an another alumnus’ bequest (I think around \$80,000). Jebb Linch, who had been my little Brother in my senior year, an attorney in Westerville, became Treasurer [of the House Corporation] in the 90s. He undertook a complicated legal maneuver to recover those funds and bring the House Corporation into compliance [a lack of] which could have forced its dissolution.

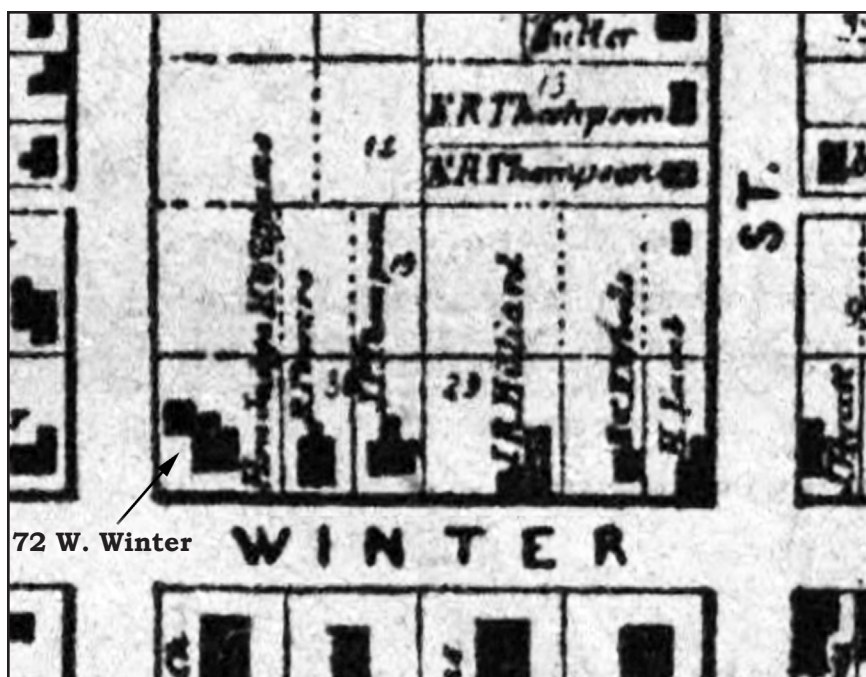
“When it became apparent that we were unlikely to attempt a third effort to recolonize, there was a vote to dissolve the 72 West Winter Street Corporation in the mid-2000s, to pay off the balance of a chattel mortgage to the National (which had been in suspense) and to donate that balance to the OWU Scholarship Fund in the name of the Chapter and a smaller Scholarship at Bowling Green in memory of Elmer Brown, who had been the initial sparkplug in trying to restart at OWU. I was a lone vote against dissolution, but the argument in favor (none of us was getting any younger) and the experience of recovering the funds from Jim Blair’s escrow account, when he died, suggested that no one wanted to set up that scenario again. After the mortgage had been repaid, there were, perhaps \$40-50,000 that went into the scholarship funds.”



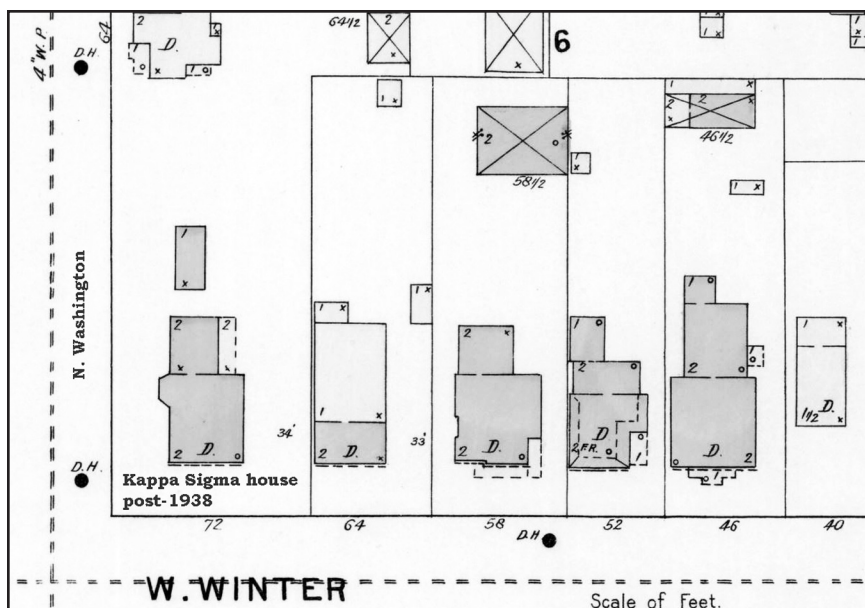
The Kappa Sigma Fraternity house at 72 West Winter Street in Delaware, Ohio. This was the location for the Delta-Kappa Chapter during my four years at Ohio Wesleyan University from 1962 to 1966. This chapter of Kappa Sigma was colonized in 1926. The Delaware County (Ohio) Historical Society reports that the fraternity relocated to 72 West Winter Street in 1938. Immediately preceding that move, the house had been at 229 North Sandusky Street. This image is from the collection of the Delaware County (Ohio) Historical Society.



An 1875 artist's rendition of the residence at 72 West Winter Street. The image appears on page 32 of *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Delaware County, Ohio*, published by L. H. Everts. Then, the front porch had not yet been added and a large annex was present at the rear of the residence. This image is from the collection of the Delaware County (Ohio) Historical Society.



Part of the 1860 map, *Plan of Delaware, Delaware County, Ohio*. The document indicates that Judge Hosea Williams owned the property at 72 West Winter Street. On the map, the house has the same footprint visible in the artist's rendition. From *Delaware Run Restoration, Delaware, Ohio*. Accessed October 1, 2022 at: <https://sites.owu.edu/delawarerun/chronology/>.



Part of the 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map of Delaware, Ohio. Displayed is the footprint of the structure that became the Kappa Sigma house in 1938. This house was on the northeast corner of West Winter and North Washington Streets. Significant changes to the building had been made between 1875 and 1895. A front porch had been added and the large annex at the rear of the house was no longer present. Another alteration had been made along the west side of the residence. It is not clear whether these changes had been caused by remodeling, or perhaps resulted from rebuilding after a fire. This structure has been demolished and replaced by an apartment building.



In 1926, a local fraternity at Ohio Wesleyan, Theta Delta Psi, became a Kappa Sigma Colony. This is a view of the residence at 229 North Sandusky Street, where Theta Delta Psi was located in 1926 and 1927, as revealed in those years' editions of the Ohio Wesleyan yearbook, *Le Bijou*. By 1928, the Colony had achieved Chapter status, for that year's *Le Bijou* located Kappa Sigma at this address. The 1929 *Le Bijou* is the source of this particular image, which comes from the Delaware County (Ohio) Historical Society. Kappa Sigma moved to the West Winter Street location in 1938. The 229 North Sandusky Street address for Kappa Sigma is confirmed by the *National Register of Historic Places*, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Continuation Sheet Section Number 8, page 11, *Historic Northwest District, Delaware, Ohio*. The 1922 *Directory of Delaware* shows a previous location for the Theta Delta Psi Fraternity at 399 North Sandusky Street.



The Delta-Kappa Chapter of Kappa Sigma was located in this structure from 1969 until February 1982, when its charter was revoked by the National organization. Located on the northwest corner of North Franklin and Griswold Streets, the residence had previously served as the fraternity house for Delta Tau Delta. In 2022, it is the site of the Delta House Inn, a bed and breakfast business. This image is from the Delaware County (Ohio) Historical Society.

Appendix

Attempts to End Constitutional Racism at the National Level of Kappa Sigma

The 1960s were momentous years in the history of civil rights in the United States. Americans were no longer able to completely ignore racial injustice and the civil and political problems it caused. Significant issues were debated and partially addressed in the areas of education, employment, housing, and voting rights. No area of society escaped this scrutiny. Admission practices of colleges and universities were examined. And the administration of Ohio Wesleyan addressed the membership criteria of its Greek organizations.

L'Heureux reports that the OWU administration set September 1, 1966 as a deadline for a certain stipulation to be met. By that time, all fraternity and sorority chapters were required to certify in writing that the local chapter, alone, had complete control over membership selection, without interference from the corresponding national organization. In addition, each national organization was required to sign the same statement. The National organization of Kappa Sigma missed this deadline by about a week or ten days, but L'Heureux was finally able to obtain that part of the required certification, which allowed Kappa Sigma to remain on campus for another fifteen years.

L'Heureux supplied a timeline for the events leading to removal of racist language and innuendo in documents at the National level of Kappa Sigma. He noted that at the 41st Grand Conclave, held at Miami, Florida in 1957, the word "white" was removed from the requirements for membership. This was done by amendment of the Constitution of Kappa Sigma. However, at the same Grand Conclave, maintenance of the status quo was

assured by addition of new text to the Ritual Oath taken at the time of initiation. The added words declared that no pledge would be initiated if he would be unacceptable to any member of Kappa Sigma, wherever he might be. L'Heureux continued:

“Beginning with the 43rd Grand Conclave at Portland, Oregon, in 1961, Constitutional amendments were introduced to the effect that no chapter be obliged to discriminate based on race, religion, or nationality. These were defeated in 1961, 1963, and again in 1965 at the 45th Grand Conclave at Houston, Texas. At Houston, I was the Chapter’s delegate and one of the 32 votes in favor, with 101 delegates against the amendment.

“In 1967, at Atlanta, essentially the same text was introduced as a Resolution, rather than an Amendment. It was tabled by a 10-vote margin. Hanging over that Conclave was the fact that the Colorado College Chapter had pledged a Black student and had been put under an Alumni Board of Control earlier that spring. Before that Board could be organized, that Chapter clandestinely initiated the man. The fear among many of us at the 1967 Grand Conclave was that the SEC [Supreme Executive Committee of Kappa Sigma] would suspend the Colorado College Chapter after the Conclave.

“Instead, there were efforts at two other SEC meetings to resolve the matter differently. At the first, possibly in October 1967, newly elected WGT [Worthy Grand Treasurer] Don Rowe moved to remove the Alumni Board of Control and restore the Colorado College Chapter to regular status. No action was taken at that meeting. In January 1968, at the next SEC meeting, Senator John Tower of Texas (who had recently been elected as WGMC [Worthy Grand Master of Ceremonies for Kappa Sigma]) spoke to the issue rather forcefully. On a vote of 3-1-1, the Chapter at Colorado College was restored to regular status and the Alumni Board of

Control dissolved. The Chapter was told that the earlier initiation was invalid, but that it was now at liberty to initiate the man officially. To my knowledge, I believe that to have been done. I do not know where that SEC meeting was held. My information on the discussions and actions came from Brad Holbrook, who was the [Kappa Sigma] Ritualist at the time and attended both meetings. (I was appointed Assistant Ritualist in March 1968 and, serendipitously, the first new chapter I installed that month was Kappa-Delta Chapter at the University of South Florida, in Tampa.) The effect of this action by the SEC was to end any action nationally against any Chapter based on race and membership. Prior to the situation at the Colorado College Chapter, the Chapter at Swarthmore was the last Chapter to have been suspended, in 1963, for “contumacious” [willful disobedience of authority] activity against the Fraternity, which I understood to be about pledging.

“After I told Charlie Anderson, the Ohio DGM [District Grand Master], at the OWU Homecoming in 1968 about this, he refused to believe it. Soon thereafter, he was no longer DGM until [he resumed that post in] 1975.”

L’Heureux attended the 1971 Grand Conclave in Los Angeles, where a few Black brothers were present as delegates. But the Ritual Oath remained unchanged from that which had been approved fourteen years before. L’Heureux continued:

“No change was made with respect to the section in the Ritual Oath that had been added in 1957 until the Fraternity’s first comprehensive Ritual revision, which I supervised as Ritualist and [which] was approved by a special Committee at the 1977 Grand Conclave in St. Louis. The revisions were officially adopted by the SEC after line-by-line review over several meetings in 1977-1978. The new edition was published in 1979. Most of the “revisions” were of two types: 1) replacement of

archaic words/phrases and 2) promulgation of specific instructions on movements and actions during the ceremonies.” However, an old prejudice dies hard, as is noted below.

Final Thoughts

Charlie Anderson’s latent racism, with his return to the post of District Grand Master in 1975, and his refusal to allow initiation of pledges until Delta-Kappa regained Chapter status in 1977, must have had a devastating effect on efforts to rebuild membership. Other factors contributing to the demise of the Kappa Sigma Chapter at OWU include the decline in enrollment at OWU and the generally lower percentage of students pledging Greek organizations, due to a variety of factors. That OWU did not own the Kappa Sigma house meant that it had a less than optimal ability to influence conditions there. Indeed, in the year before Delta-Kappa became dormant, the University was actively encouraging students to live in University housing and required some who still chose to live off campus to participate in the University meal plan.

In the future, if another attempt at recolonization of Kappa Sigma at OWU occurs, this record may be of interest.

James S. Hannum, M.D.
October 10, 2022



